

KING DRACULA



TRIAL BY FIRE

WOHL • LA MANNO • CORTES • ESPOSITO

KING DRACULA

ISSUE 3 OF 4: TRIAL BY FIRE

As the Vampire Lords' plan grows ever closer to its apocalyptic fruition, they manage to subdue and capture Dracula. Now, surrounded by enemies and out of time, a beaten and bloodied Dracula languishes in prison awaiting his execution.

He has them right where he wants them!

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BLOOD SHADOW

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FREEDOM.

AFTER COUNTLESS YEARS LANGUISHING IN THE UNDERWORLD, HE HAD FORGOTTEN WHAT IT FELT LIKE...

...WHAT IT TASTED LIKE.

NOW HE REMEMBERS.

AND TO THOSE WHO WANT TO TAKE IT AWAY...

I DON'T LIKE THIS. WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE, MAN?

CALM DOWN, SERG. THIS IS WHERE SHE TOLD US TO WAIT. SO WE WAIT.

IF YOU HAVE ANOTHER IDEA, FEEL FREE TO TELL HER.

...HE HAS A MESSAGE FOR THEM.

...HIS ERSTWHILE SO-CALLED ALLIES WHO ONCE CALLED HIM KING BUT NOW THIRST FOR HIS BLOOD...

NO, MAN. OF COURSE NOT. I JUST WISH I KNEW WHO SHE WANTED US TO MEET. SEEMS WEIRD, YOU KNOW--

THEY HAD THEIR CHANCE, AND THEY MISSED IT.



HOLY SHIT! IT'S HIM!

WHERE IS SHE?

WHERE IS BELA?

NOW IT'S DRACULA'S TURN.





SHE...

...WAS
SUPPOSED...

...TO BE
HERE!

KRAK

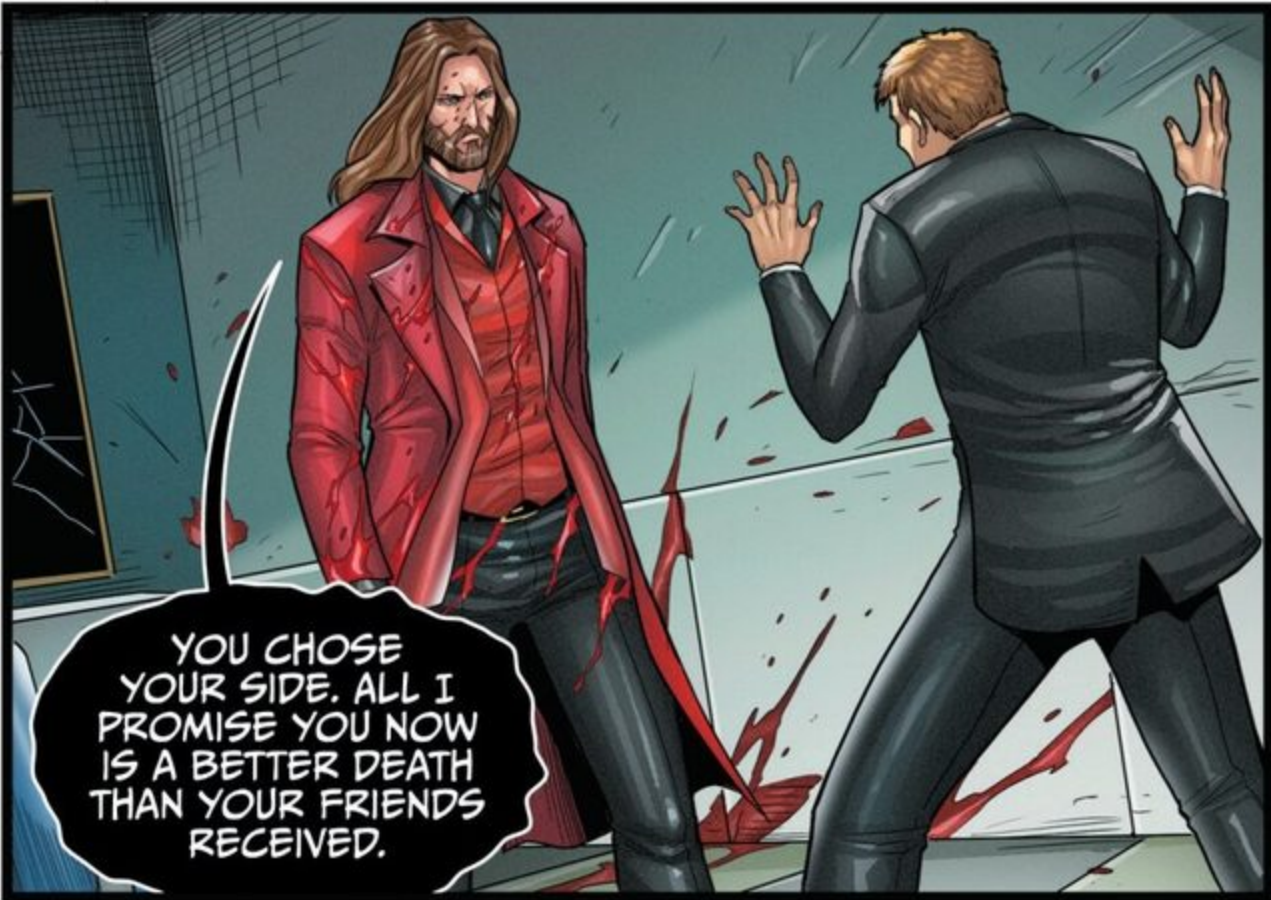
WAIT!
WAIT! LISTEN
TO ME.



SPEAK.

I CAN TELL YOU, BUT SHE'LL KILL ME.

PROMISE YOU'LL KEEP ME SAFE AND I'LL TELL YOU ALL I KNOW.



YOU CHOSE YOUR SIDE. ALL I PROMISE YOU NOW IS A BETTER DEATH THAN YOUR FRIENDS RECEIVED.



GO TO HELL!



I'LL KI-- AAGGHHH!



OK--OKAY--SHULLGH-- SHE--FOUND YOUR DEN. SHE'S GOING TO KILL YOUR MINIONS--

WHUNKSHHH

DAMN HER.

LIESEL VAN HELSING

VAMPIRE HUNTER

HMM. AN ANONYMOUS TIP
LEADS ME TO A DESERTED
SHIP ON A DESERTED PIER IN
THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT...

...IN THE MIDST
OF A CITYWIDE
VAMPIRE WAR.

WHAT COULD
POSSIBLY GO
WRONG?

MAYBE THEY'RE ALL
DEAD ALREADY.

YES,
WELL...

...A GIRL
CAN DREAM.

ANYWAY,
I'M HERE...

...MAY AS WELL TAKE
A LOOK AROUND--



BOLLOCKS...



DEFINITELY
VAMPIRES.

DEFINITELY
DEAD.



NICE
WORK,
HUH?
THOROUGH.



WOULDN'T
YOU SAY,
LIESEL?

DID
YOU DO
THIS?

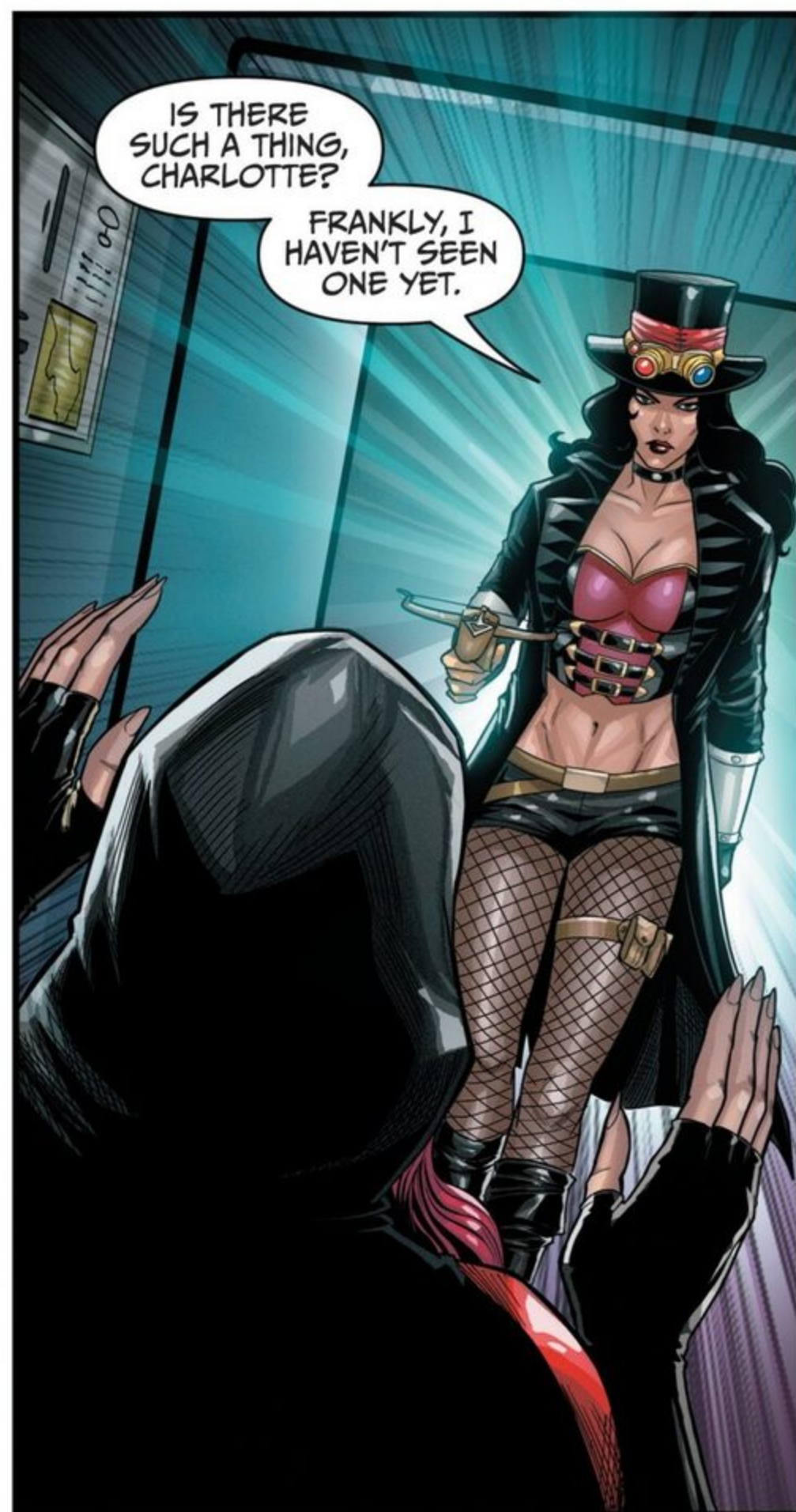




ME? NO.

BUT WE BOTH KNOW WHO DID.

TO BE FAIR, IT'S NO GREAT LOSS. THEY WEREN'T EXACTLY SALT-OF-THE-EARTH TYPES OF VAMPS.



IS THERE SUCH A THING, CHARLOTTE?

FRANKLY, I HAVEN'T SEEN ONE YET.



MAYBE YOU NEED TO LOOK A LITTLE HARDER.



LISTEN. I COME IN PEACE. FANGS HOLSTERED.

COULD YOU LOWER THAT A BIT?

FINE. WHY AM I HERE?



MY FATHER... PAID ME A VISIT.

HOW SWEET. WHY SHOULD I CARE?

HE WAS DIFFERENT. SCARED.



I GUESS GETTING KIDNAPPED AND NEARLY EXSANGUINATED BY VAMPIRE LORDS WILL DO THAT TO EVEN ONE SUCH AS HIM.



WHY DO YOU CARE WHAT HAPPENS TO HIM? I THOUGHT YOU HATED DRACULA.

I STILL DO. OF COURSE I DO.

BUT SINCE HE AND I MET, WE'VE BEEN... CONNECTED SOMEHOW.

HE'S NOT AFRAID FOR HIMSELF--



--BUT FOR WHAT THE VAMPIRE LORDS COULD UNLEASH IF THEY'RE SUCCESSFUL.

AND IF HE IS WORRIED ABOUT EVERYONE ELSE, SHOULDN'T WE BE TOO?

HMM. ALL RIGHT, THEN. WHAT DO YOU WANT US TO DO ABOUT IT?

Elsewhere...
...beneath the city streets...

SEVERAL WEEKS AGO, UPON HIS RETURN TO THIS WORLD, DRACULA WAS ABDUCTED AND FORCED TO TAKE PART IN A RITUAL DESIGNED TO BRING FORTH THE RED GOD.

THE CEREMONY FAILED MISERABLY, THANKS TO A TIMELY INTERVENTION FROM LIESEL VAN HELSING.

PLEASE TELL ME THAT OUR ENDEAVORS WILL BE FRUITFUL THIS TIME.

THAT IS MOST ASSURED, SIR.

AFTER OUR RECENT... SETBACK. WE HAVE SET PARAMETERS IN PLACE TO ASSURE SUCCESS.

THANKS TO OUR RECOVERY OF THE ANOINTED ONE'S RING AT THE SITE OF THE PREVIOUS RITUAL, WE HAVE INCORPORATED A CONFINEMENT FUNCTION INTO THE RUNES.

ONCE BLOOD IS DRAWN, HE WILL BE UNABLE TO LEAVE THE DESIGNATED AREA UNTIL THE LOSS IS COMPLETE.

VERY GOOD.

NOW WE JUST NEED THE MAN, HIMSELF.

IT IS QUITE UNFORTUNATE THAT WE LOST HIM--AND LORD KANE--AT THE CLOISTERS.

LUCY WESTENRA, ONCE DRACULA'S MOST LOYAL LIEUTENANT, BETRAYED HIM IN SERVICE TO THE VAMPIRE LORDS.

DRACULA Sired AN ARMY OF VAMPIRES AND AMBUSHED US, LORD MARCUS.

LORD KANE'S DEATH WAS... UNFORTUNATE.

I SWEAR TO YOU THAT IT WILL NOT HAPPEN AGAIN.

SELENE, THE BLOOD COUNTESS, SWORE LOYALTY TO THE LORDS AS WELL.

RECENTLY, BOTH WOMEN HAVE BEGUN TO DOUBT THE CAUSE.

YES, I AM QUITE SURE OF THAT.

"OUR LOVELY BELLA IS TAKING CARE OF THAT AS WE SPEAK..."

ASSASS

HEY--
NNGHHH--A
LITTLE HELP
HERE?!

AAAAAAAAAAAA

BRAKKA

BRAKKA

BRAKKA

THANKS.

TOOK
YA LONG
ENOUGH.

SORRY I
WAS BUSY
DOING MY
JOB...

ROOK...

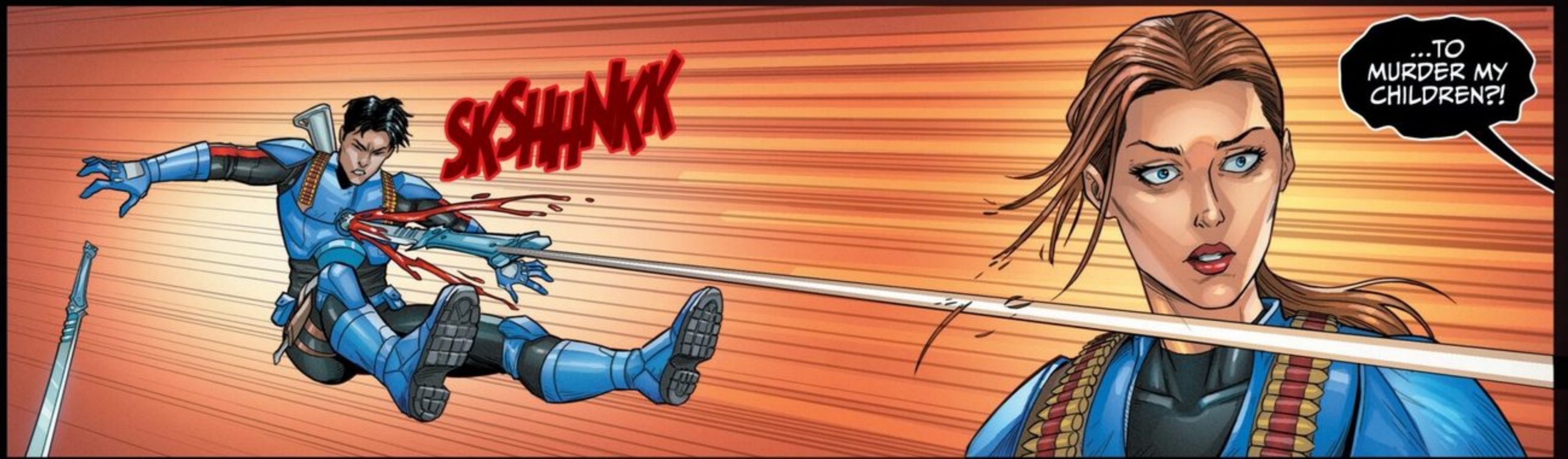
YOU MUST
CEASE THIS
ATTACK...

YES...OF
COURSE.

...I--MUST
CEASE THIS
ATTACK...

SKETCH

HOW
DARE
SHE...





GOOD NIGHT, KING.

5:15 AM. Cathedral of Saint John the Divine.
Manhattan.

EDWARD ROTH HAS BEEN
LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS
DAY FOR A WHILE NOW.

DECADES AGO, HE WAS ONE
OF THE TENS OF MILLIONS
OF KIDS WHO DREAMED OF
BECOMING PRESIDENT.



NOW, HE
HAS A DECENT
POSITION IN THE
MAYOR'S OFFICE,
AND HE KNOWS
THAT'S AS FAR
AS HE'LL GO.



BUT LAST YEAR,
AS HE WAS
LAMENTING HIS
LACK OF A
FUTURE,
THINGS BEGAN
TO CHANGE.



AS CRAZY AS IT
SOUNDS, EDWARD
LEARNED THAT
MONSTERS WERE
HERE IN THE CITY.

UNBEKNOWNST TO
MOST, THEY WERE
INFILTRATING
GOVERNMENT,
CORPORATIONS
AND CRIME
SYNDICATES, AND
THEIR PRESENCE
WAS GROWING.



BUT THEY NEEDED
HUMAN HELP TO
REMAIN UNNOTICED
BY SOCIETY--PEOPLE
WITH CONNECTIONS.

EDDIE WAS AT A
DINNER PARTY AT THE
WATER CLUB WHEN HE
WAS APPROACHED BY A
BEAUTIFUL, BEGUILING
WOMAN NAMED SELENE
WHO ASKED IF HE
COULD HELP HER
NAVIGATE CITY POLITICS.



HE
COULDN'T
SAY NO.

HE SOON LEARNED HE WAS
DEALING WITH VAMPIRES.

AT FIRST IT SCARED HIM,
THEN IT THRILLED HIM.

AND RECENTLY,
HE MADE A DEAL
TO BECOME ONE
OF THEM.



HE CAME
DOWN HERE
THINKING
TONIGHT WILL
BE THE NIGHT.

NOW HE'S
HAVING
SECOND
THOUGHTS.



TONIGHT
SHALL BE A
GLORIOUS
NIGHT.

OUR
ERSTWHILE
KING
DRACULA HAS
RETURNED...

...AND HE
BEQUEATHS
US HIS
GREATEST
GIFT.

NNGGHHH...
DAMN YOU.

WITH HIS
SACRED BLOOD,
OUR CREATOR
VRYKOLAKAS SHALL
BE REBORN!

DAMN
ALL OF
YOU!



FOR CENTURIES
I LONGED TO
RETURN TO
YOU.



WE WERE TO
BUILD AN EMPIRE
TOGETHER.



AND WE
SHALL ALWAYS BE
THANKFUL FOR YOUR
CONTRIBUTION,
DRACULA.

WON'T WE,
COUNTESS...?



SHNNKKK

YOU
WILL ALL
DIE HERE
TODAY.



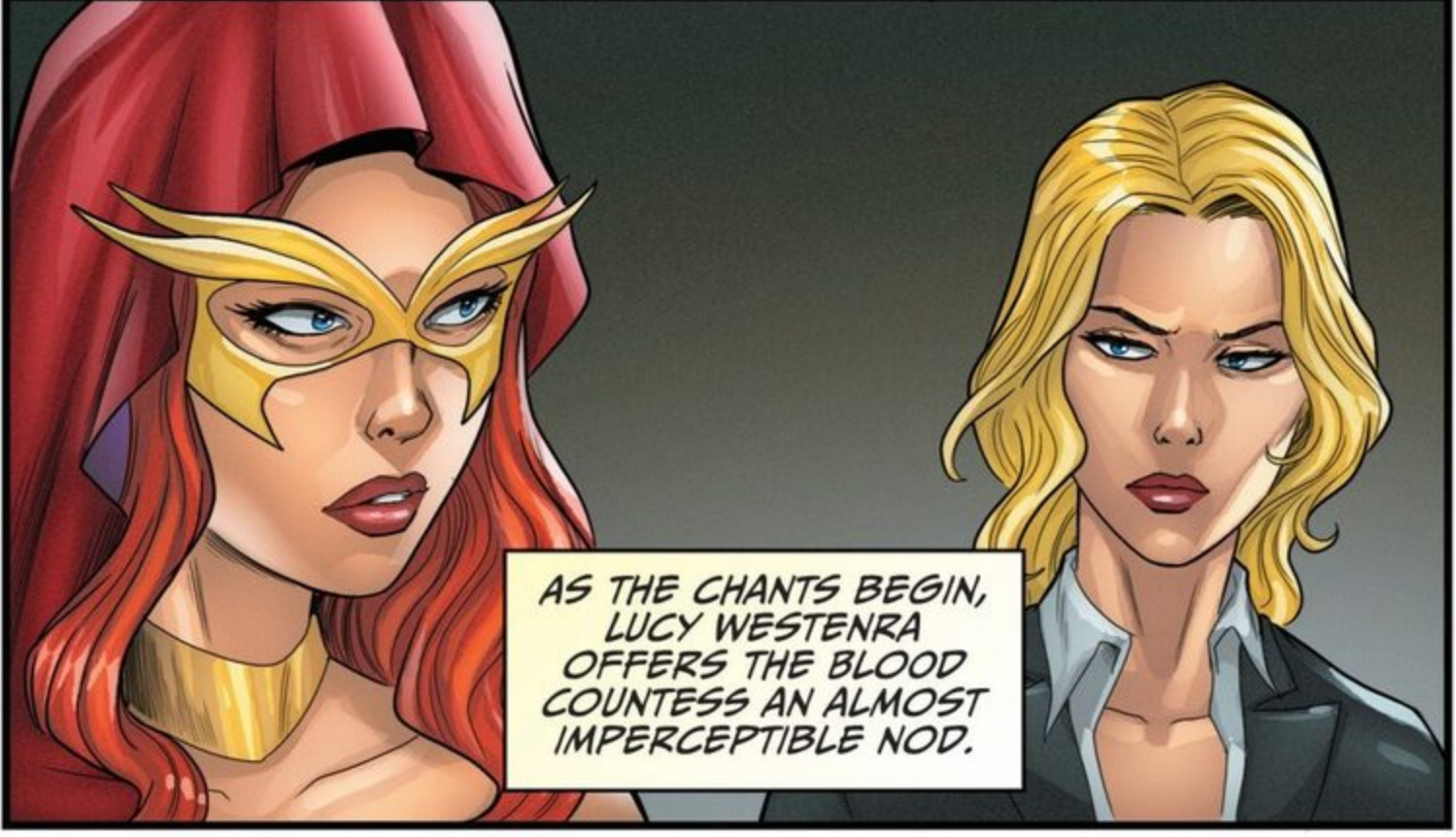
BEGIN THE
CEREMONY.



REDITE AD NOS,
MAGNUS VRYKOLAKAS...

REDITE AD NOS,
MAGNUS VRYKOLAKAS...

REDITE AD NOS,
MAGNUS VRYKOLAKAS...



AS THE CHANTS BEGIN,
LUCY WESTENRA
OFFERS THE BLOOD
COUNTESS AN ALMOST
IMPERCEPTIBLE NOD.



SIGNALS ARE GIVEN.
THE TIME HAS COME.



THE REBELLION IS AT HAND.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?!

AAGGHHH!



SSHHHH

LORD MARCUS? WHAT SHOULD WE DO?



I HOPE YOU CAN FORGIVE ME, VLADIMIR.



I'M SORRY IT TOOK SO LONG FOR US TO REALIZE THIS WAS A GRAVE MISTAKE. I PRAY IT'S NOT TOO LATE...

WWW



VOOOOSHNNKKSSHH

...FOR ALL OF US.



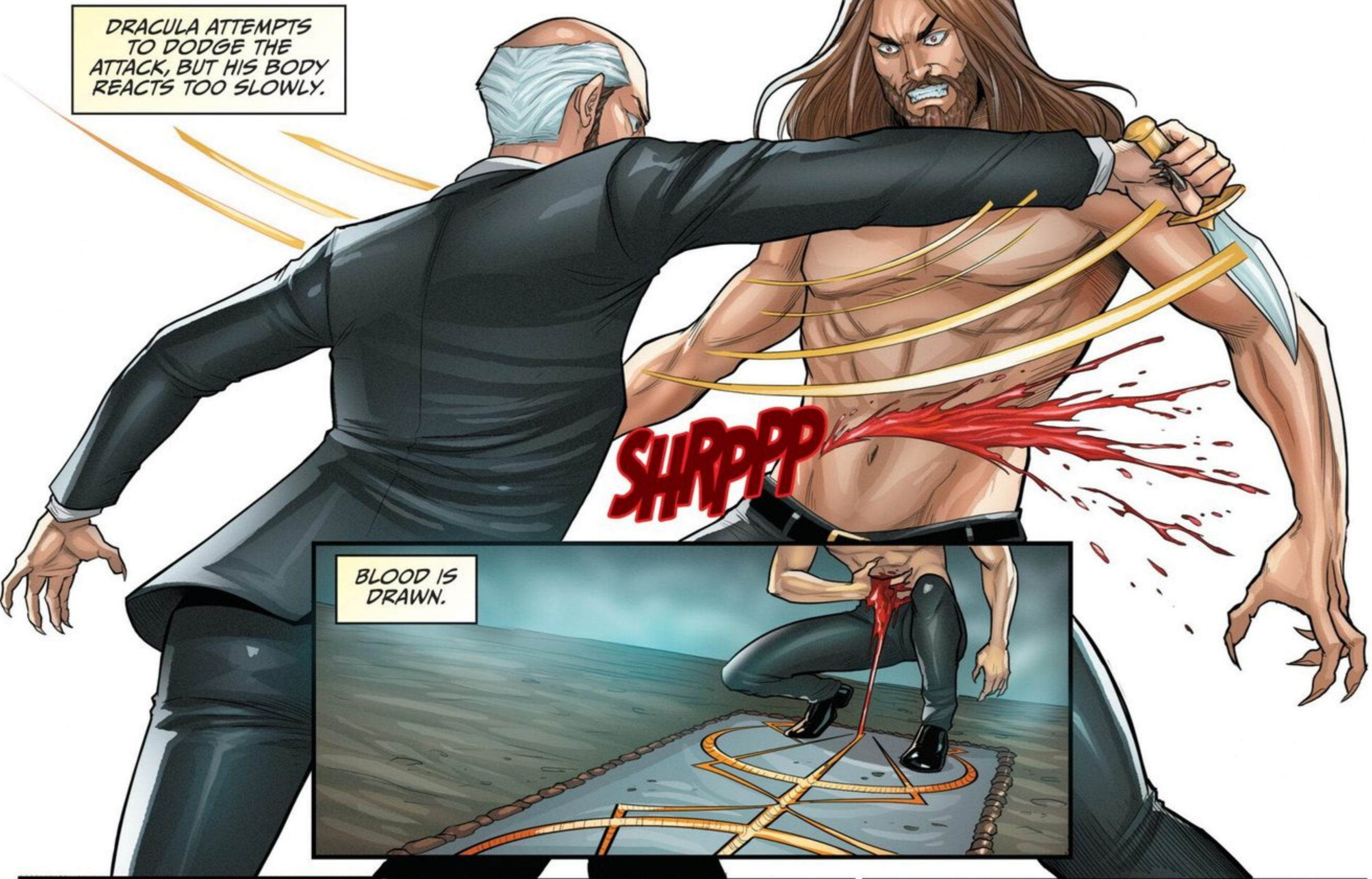


THERE IS NOWHERE TO FLEE ANYMORE. NO MORE OF YOUR BARBARIC GUERRILLA TACTICS.

YOU CALL YOURSELF A KING! FACE ME...AND TAKE BACK YOUR CROWN!

WITH PLEASURE.

DRACULA ATTEMPTS TO DODGE THE ATTACK, BUT HIS BODY REACTS TOO SLOWLY.



BLOOD IS DRAWN.



VLADIMIR-- DON'T!

WHNN



SILENCE, COUNTESS. YOU'VE ALREADY CAUSED ENOUGH HARM TODAY..

WHACK



THIS IS BETWEEN US. ISN'T THAT RIGHT, KING?

OH YES.

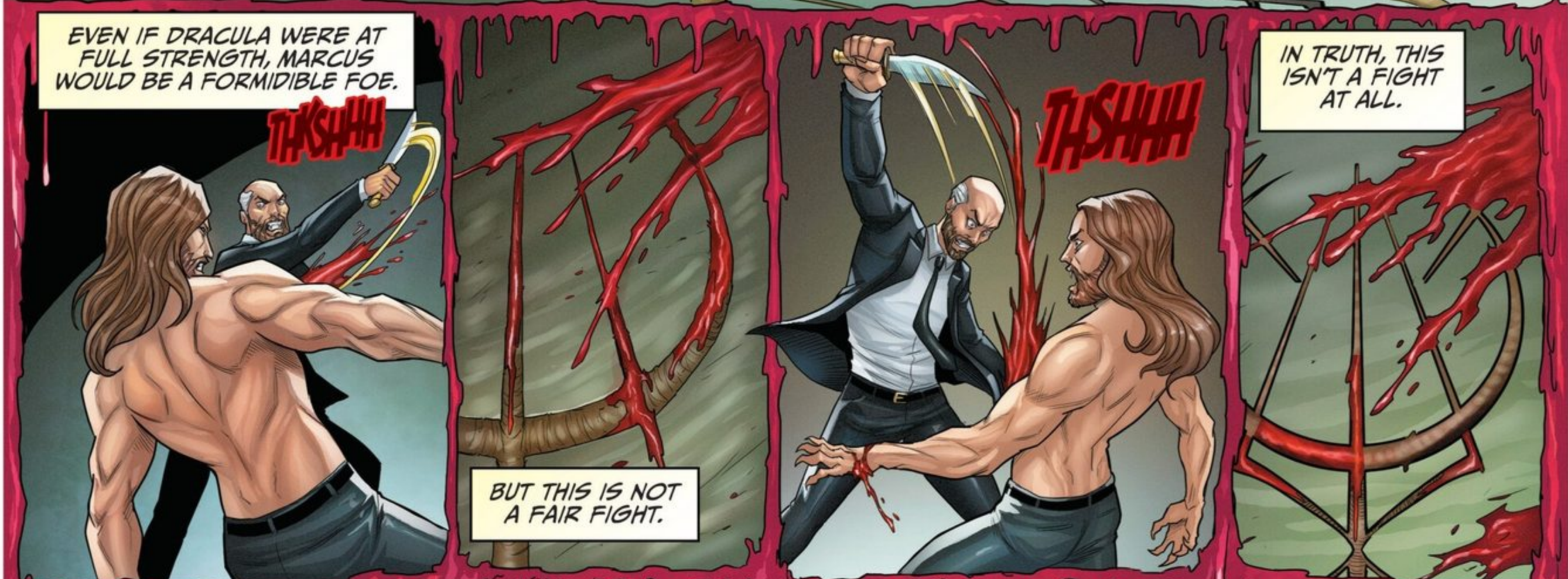


POWERED ONLY BY HIS PRIDE AND FURY, DRACULA CHARGES.

AAAAHHHHH!



TO NO AVAIL.



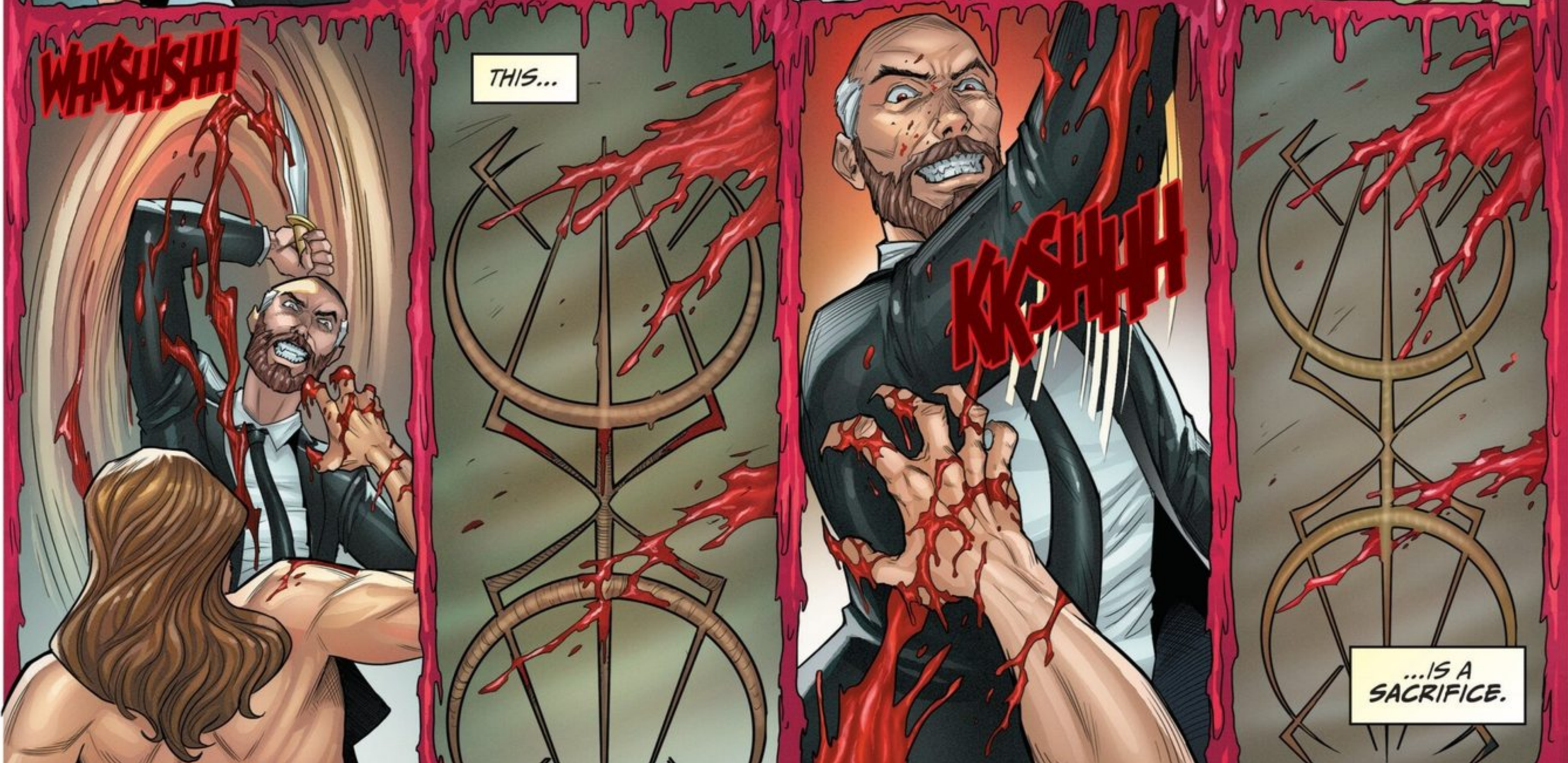
EVEN IF DRACULA WERE AT FULL STRENGTH, MARCUS WOULD BE A FORMIDABLE FOE.

THSHHH

BUT THIS IS NOT A FAIR FIGHT.

TSHHH

IN TRUTH, THIS ISN'T A FIGHT AT ALL.



WHKSHHH

THIS...

KKSHHH

...IS A SACRIFICE.



VRYKOLAKAS...
YOU...SHOULD
NOT BE IN THIS
WORLD.



IT WAS MY
HUBRIS THAT
BROUGHT YOU
HERE.

AND
I SHALL
SEND YOU
BACK.



WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING?

WHAT I
MUST.

HAHAHAHAHA!





YES, IT WAS
YOUR ESSENCE
THAT BROUGHT
ME HERE,
LORDLING.

FOR
THAT, I AM
GRATEFUL.

BUT I'VE
NO INTENTION
OF RETURNING
TO THE VOID.
EVER!

YOU...
MUST...
GO...



VLAD
DRACUL. MY
WAYWARD
CHILD.

THIS
SHOULD BE
A TIME TO
REJOICE.

BUT YOU TAKE
NO JOY IN MY
RESURRECTION.



VERY WELL.
I SHALL BE
BENEVOLENT.



ONCE, I
BESTOWED
UPON YOU
ETERNAL
LIFE.



AND YOU
ANointed
YOURSELF
KING.



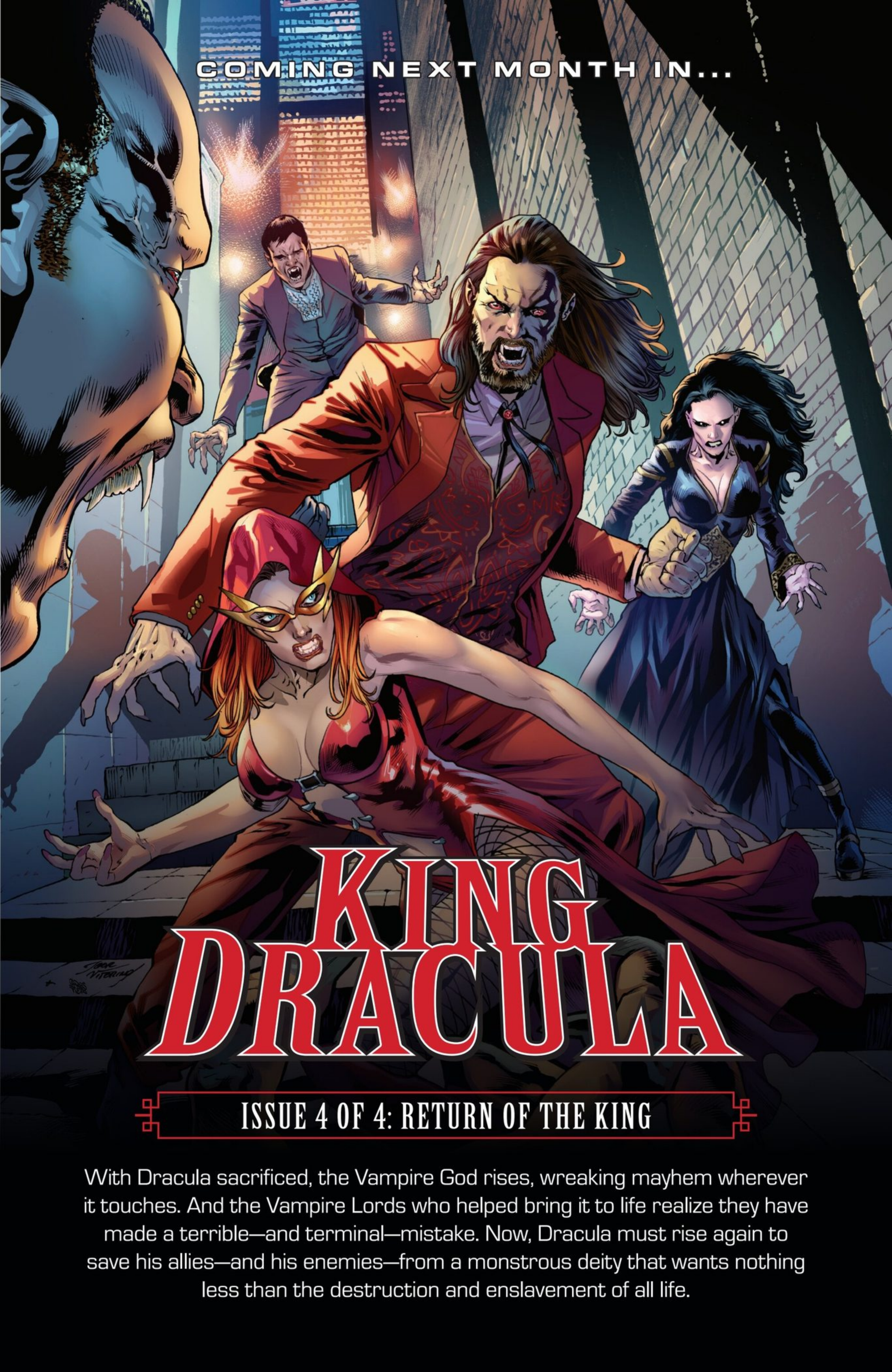
NOW, YOU
HAVE FALLEN,
AND ONCE AGAIN
I GRANT YOUR
HEART'S
DESIRE.



ETERNAL
DEATH.

LA
MANN

To be concluded...



COMING NEXT MONTH IN...

KING DRACULA

ISSUE 4 OF 4: RETURN OF THE KING

With Dracula sacrificed, the Vampire God rises, wreaking mayhem wherever it touches. And the Vampire Lords who helped bring it to life realize they have made a terrible—and terminal—mistake. Now, Dracula must rise again to save his allies—and his enemies—from a monstrous deity that wants nothing less than the destruction and enslavement of all life.

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